

THE  
LETTERS  
OF  
*HIBERN-ANGLUS*:  
CONTAINING  
STRICTURES  
ON THE CONDUCT OF  
The Present Administration  
IN IRELAND,  
AND A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE PROCEEDINGS ADOPTED SINCE THE REGENCY  
BY THE  
*Irish Catholics*,  
WITH OTHER PAPERS.

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BY  
JOHN JOSEPH DILLON, ESQ.  
BARRISTER AT LAW.

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“ Provided also, That *nothing* herein contained shall be construed  
*in any manner* to prevent or *impede* the *undoubted right* of His Majes-  
ty's subjects of this realm to *petition* His Majesty, or both Houses,  
or either House of Parliament, for redress of *any* public or private  
grievance.”

IRISH CONVENTION ACT.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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This Publication consists of a Letter to a Noble Lord upon the general state of Ireland during the last year—of the Letters of HIBERN-ANGLUS, many of which have not hitherto appeared—and of an Appendix containing the Letter of an ENGLISHMAN on the effect likely to be produced by the conduct of the Irish Government in our continental operations—and also three Letters by a SCOTSMAN, upon the connection of the Catholic Question with the claims of Scotland, to be relieved from the English Test Act. The three last have been published with the permission of the Gentleman by whom they were written.

There are contained also copies of the Convention Act and of the Proclamation, as well as an Index of the Letters, by which the reader will be able to turn to any of the points discussed, which he may be disposed to think most to deserve his consideration. The Letters have been printed with the dates of the days on which they were composed, and they have been published principally for the perusal of Members in both Houses of Parliament, inclined to devote their attention to the affairs of Ireland, at this critical conjuncture. From the rapidity with which they were originally written, and on the present occasion have passed through the press, there may possibly exist various inaccuracies, which have escaped the Author's observation, and which he trusts the reader will excuse.

24th December, 1811.

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# Introduction.

—◆—  
LETTER TO A NOBLE LORD,

*&c. &c.*

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD \*\*\*\*\*.

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MY LORD \*,

WHEN I had the honour of transmitting to your Lordship, in 1810, a quarto volume containing Memoirs with other Dissertations and Notes, upon the Catholic Question, I had conceived, as indeed I expressed myself in that work, that the literary labours in which I had been so long engaged, in the hope of promoting a desirable settlement of the controversy, had terminated with that publication. Under the circumstances which *then* existed, I was satisfied that no progress could be made in the accomplishment of an arrangement, however necessary to complete, and to render effectual the Union with Ireland; and I was also of opinion, that by a renewed pressure of the matter under such circumstances in Parliament, where it had been already sufficiently discussed, no desirable object could be obtained. On the contrary, I thought that such a mode of proceeding might occasion detriment to the Catholic cause; whilst it could not fail to create pain in a quarter to which, from age and infirmity as well as from gratitude, in relation to transactions at an earlier period,

\* This was originally written as a private Letter, but has been printed, as containing an exposition of the motives, which have actuated the Author of this publication.

(with which many are familiar), respect and deference appeared to me to be peculiarly due. This impression I not only felt, but publicly avowed, both in 1807, and in the work above-mentioned.

I did not think I should so soon have had occasion to obtrude myself again, with reference to this subject, on the attention of the public, in any polemical dissertation. I had certainly not conceived the probability that I should have had to contend, at the close of 1811, with those, whom at the commencement of the year it undoubtedly was proposed actually to have removed from office; and who were declared to be continued in their situations only from necessity, and with apparent reluctance: but that it would have fallen on me to defend the Catholic Body, from measures wholly unprecedented, and not attempted at any former period of His Majesty's reign, I candidly own I thought beyond possibility. In this sentiment your Lordship will easily believe I am not singular. It is the universal sentiment of the Catholic Body. We had encountered repeatedly disappointment, but for this we certainly were not prepared. That the authors of such measures—of such ferment and confusion as they have created in Ireland—of such a violation as we have seen committed against what even the Statute itself, on which Government has attempted to found its proceedings, acknowledges and confirms as the “UNDOUBTED RIGHT OF THE SUBJECT”—that persons who have thus attacked the liberties, and outraged the feelings of a whole nation, should not have been dismissed, is a circumstance for which, under the predicament in which the Royal authority has been placed by the Regency Act, we can sufficiently account. Should they, however, be continued in office, and allowed to devise *future* plans of government; it would be to us all matter of the deepest anguish, not only as Catholics, but



as subjects of the British Empire, deeply interested in its welfare, and consequently in the counsels by which the Sovereign authority shall be advised, in the conduct of Government. It cannot, however, be supposed, that the people of Ireland are to be excluded from *all* consideration or influence, in the general administration of Irish affairs. Their conduct has not deserved such an exclusion—their consequence in the scale prevents the possibility of such an exclusion—and the attempt to exclude them would not only fail of success, but conduce to a melancholy result, which all would deplore, and which no one more sincerely, than myself, would wish to obviate.

We still, therefore, support ourselves in a confidence, that upon the meeting of Parliament, circumstances will be divulged, by which what to some may seem an incomprehensible mystery, will be satisfactorily explained. We call to remembrance the whole tenor of political conduct which has marked the character of the Prince Regent—his early political attachments—the principles which he has invariably professed—the *declarations*, stated by persons high in his personal confidence, to have been *authorised*, in regard to the Catholics, at a former period—the maxims in which, on an ever memorable occasion, it was notified, that His Royal Highness has been pleased to educate the interesting heiress of the Imperial Throne. We dwell with delight on all these considerations: and we abandon none of those expectations which we have invariably entertained from the liberal ideas, the splendid endowments, and intellectual accomplishments, that distinguish so eminently, beyond other princes of Europe, the illustrious Personage to whom the powers of Royalty are likely to be speedily confided, without ulterior restriction.

Before communicating the history of this publication,

allow me to advert to the state of things in Ireland at the commencement of His Majesty's illness.

Your Lordship must well recollect the circumstances which marked the disposition of Ireland, about that period. During the year 1810, the unpopularity of the present Administration seemed to be universal. Dublin had become clamorous for a repeal of the Union. The counties of Meath and Mayo had passed strong resolutions and addresses to the Throne. A spirit of general dissatisfaction at the conduct of Ministers pervaded Ireland. It was openly avowed, and loudly declared, in a manner to compel the most staunch supporters of their measures, not only to abandon their cause, but even to take an active part against their friends\*. Such was the *general* state of Ireland, and the *general* feeling of *all* classes. One cannot be surprised at the circumstance. It was the natural cause of the unnatural system pursued by the present Administration, in the government of Ireland. Other Ministers, under such circumstances, would instantly have retired.

The Catholics, partaking of course the general sentiment, had recently held an aggregate meeting. They had hesitated about petitioning Parliament again, not from *respect* to the prejudices of England, but from *disgust*. They were induced, however, to determine upon another application, principally indeed, on that occasion, by the speech of Mr. Finnerty. That speech, whatever opinions may be entertained respecting the merits of the individual, (with whom I am wholly unacquainted,) I think, upon dispassionate consideration, must be thought to deserve not reprobation, but the thanks of those anxious to secure the mutual connection of the two countries. It produced in my mind this im-

\* Vide the Resolutions of the county of Mayo, in the last year.

pression at the time; it excited in the Irish Catholics, present at that meeting, revival of hope from the liberality of England, to which Mr. Finnerty bore the strongest testimony; and it roused them from that state of despair in which they had been plunged—a state which, added to the general despondency of Ireland, might have produced the most fatal consequences\*.

At this critical juncture the illness of His Majesty occurred. When it had taken a decided turn, no pains were omitted by myself in representing, among my friends in England, the necessity of immediate attention to the state of Ireland, and the propriety of making an early communication to the principal Catholics, by which the proceedings of the Body might be regulated, in a manner to prevent what had occurred in 1806 and 1807. I had previously represented the serious disposition of the public mind in that country. The Catholics, however, of their own accord, acted liberally and with prudence. They seemed not disposed to press any thing prematurely; and as the best means of ascertaining how to proceed, after various adjournments, they determined on enlarging their Committee, “in order that, at a moment  
“when their emancipation might be considered as at  
“hand, it might become the depository of the collec-

\* Mr. Finnerty may languish in a jail, for having indulged an excess of political ardour, or possibly of political rancour, beyond what is allowed by law, but *this speech* will be long remembered, and hereafter generally approved. I am not surprised, that at the late aggregate meeting of the Catholics in July, a resolution should have passed in his favour. I will candidly own, that I have myself been impressed with prepossessions against this individual; but circumstances have recently come to my knowledge respecting *some* of his transactions in Ireland, which do him honour. If my information be accurate, he made, on one occasion, a most honourable sacrifice of his *interest* to principle. He has not been wholly disregarded by many public characters of *respectability*; and I conceive him to be the enemy more of himself, than of society.

“ tive wisdom of the Catholic Body.” Their conduct, on this occasion, I should have thought, would have satisfied any one, that the leading members of that Body had really at heart the accomplishment of a settlement, upon grounds consistent with the mutual honour and wishes of both countries. It certainly satisfied myself; and I had looked to the meeting of a Committee, which should contain a *representation* and become an organ of the Catholic Body, as the best and indeed as the only means of effecting, upon any principle of mutual concession, a satisfactory arrangement; unless indeed the Ministers of the Prince Regent, whoever they might be, were disposed to anticipate every wish entertained by the Catholics, and voluntarily to propose Parliament to abolish, in Ireland, all civil distinction on account of religious opinions. This I have always conceived to be true policy; and I stated in my *Memoirs*, that whatever “ relief Parliament in its wisdom might “ think proper to grant the Catholics, I have always “ wished *that it should be spontaneous, and independent of any petition from that Body\**.” If Ministers, how-

\* Page 17, “ *Memoirs*.” Having seen accidentally, whilst revising the press, the Dublin Evening Post of the 17th instant, I was surprised at finding my name introduced in a letter bearing the signature of Dr. Milner, in which that publication is characterised as having been written “ by a degenerate Irishman, the main object of which is to prove, that “ the civil power has a right of determining the extent and conditions of “ the exercise of spiritual jurisdiction,” which doctrines the learned Bishop emphatically pronounces to be “ *absolutely heretical*.”

In making this charge the Right Rev. Prelate must have relied upon the circumstance, that these *Memoirs*, from the expensive nature of the publication, and their application principally to England, have not obtained circulation in Ireland; otherwise he never could have ventured consistently with *ordinary prudence*, to have made such a representation. I therefore beg leave to quote the passages to which he must allude, as they *really stand*; and to those who have read a scurrilous sixpenny pamphlet, circulated, I understand, under the name of this Prelate, in many thou-

ever, were not prepared to adopt such a course of proceeding, I had conceived that it was the interest of Government to have *promoted*, instead of opposing, the formation of a Committee, comprehending the Catholic

sands of copies, among the Catholics of Ireland, principally with a view it should seem, under the pretence of pastoral instruction, to vilify myself, it will appear how a work, not within the reach of those to whom the pamphlet has been addressed, has been unfairly represented.

In my Memoirs, page 40, I open the discussion upon the veto, in the following words: "When it is considered what respectable individuals at present constitute the Irish Catholic Prelacy—what support they have uniformly given to his Majesty's Government in the late perilous times, as will be admitted, I am persuaded, by all who have been connected with the administration of Ireland—with what moderation they have always expressed their wishes, even when Government have spontaneously offered to improve their situation and to promote their personal comforts—what pains they take in the election of their body to select only men eminent for piety and moderation, when left entirely to their discretion—it may, upon sober reflection, be an important question, whether it be really the interest of Government to introduce any alteration in the existing system; and whether, having had no reason to complain of a single nomination, except perhaps of one which proceeded from their own recommendation, it would be expedient at all to interfere?" And in a Note I observed, page 6, (Appendix,) that this doubt "I have invariably expressed; whenever it has happened to me to be spoken with upon the question, in consequence of the favourable reception which my exertions to elucidate the Catholic claims have had the good fortune to experience, from the British public." Is this to force an obnoxious measure upon the Catholics of Ireland?

I proceed in the same page 40, to state an opinion, that "if the State decide upon the expediency of interfering with the election of the Catholic Bishops in Ireland, the Imperial Parliament has a right, by virtue of the *civil supremacy*, to enact, without the consent of the Catholics themselves, still less of the Pope, or the necessity of communication with the See of Rome, any *civil regulations* upon this subject which it may deem expedient;" (the reader will observe the punctuation at this part of the sentence, which is that only of a semicolon,) "provided that it allow the body of Irish Catholics the Ministry of Bishops in holy orders; and that it attempt not to encroach or usurp upon that SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY, which I have already shewn not to be vested in the STATE, even in the contemplation of ENGLISH PROTESTANTS."

aristocracy, and representatives chosen from the class of landed proprietors. Without such a Committee, how could they ascertain the sentiments of the Catholics upon any point in which concession might be required?—how could Parliament communicate with the Catholic Body?—how could that Body ascertain and convey its own impressions? MONSTROUS must be held that construction of the Convention Act, which would dictate to a Jury to believe, that by the provisions of that Statute the Catholics are prevented, from adopting any means of complying, with what might be the wishes of PARLIAMENT ITSELF.

The CIRCULAR LETTER, with the deportment of the Irish Secretary on the commencement of the Regency, when communications, widely different, had been anxiously expected, astonished *every one*. It was at first disavowed, afterwards feebly defended by Ministers, and not pursued, as I thought it merited, on the part of the Catholics. It seemed, indeed, as if there existed a tacit convention, by which this gentleman was allowed to march out, with the honours of war.

Nothing material occurred in the fate of the Catholic Petition. It was necessarily presented, having been voted

Would it be believed that a Bishop, or even any person, having a character to sustain, should have stopped in quoting the above passage, at the word "*expedient*"—omitted wholly the rest of the sentence—and have charged the author with denying the Supremacy of the Pope, although in page 35, he actually and expressly *contends* for that supremacy—*justifies* the Catholics in maintaining that doctrine by texts of scripture—and states that the authority of the Pope is not a mere pre-eminence, but that it has with that pre-eminence "an incidental jurisdiction *strictly spiritual* " in the Government of the Church." After this statement, I will confidently ask of the whole Catholic Church, and of all Ireland, whether I have not been by Dr. Milner most grossly and injuriously CALUMNIATED? And I shall consider, on my part, what are the ECCLESIASTICAL CENSURES, to which those are liable, who adduce against others unfounded accusations.

previously to the illness of His Majesty—as necessarily discussed—and as some think necessarily rejected, in consequence of the predicament of Ministers and of the Prince Regent.

Being in a western island of Scotland, and thinking little of politics, your Lordship may conceive with what astonishment I read in a Scotch newspaper, the Proclamation of the Irish Government, dated the 30th of July. I at once anticipated all the mischievous consequences likely to result from that infatuated measure, and having laboured so assiduously during many years in endeavouring to reconcile differences, and to promote an amicable settlement of the controversy, I not only felt mortified at finding every object likely to be frustrated, but in common with every other Catholic gentleman, the strongest indignation at the stigma, generally affixed by that Proclamation upon every individual member of the Catholic Body. With this impression, I took up my pen to vindicate the Catholics, and to expose what appeared to me the absurdity, illegality, and danger of the measures, to which the Irish Government had resorted. In order to promote an extensive circulation of my ideas, I communicated them in Letters to the Morning Chronicle, which I have now published with many others that have not appeared. I did not at first imagine that they would have extended to such a length, but as I became more acquainted with what was passing in Ireland, the more I was induced to pursue the discussion.

It became, indeed, the more necessary, in consequence of the tone assumed by Ministers in justification of their conduct. Your Lordship must, I conceive, have been struck with that tone, but especially with the Letters that appeared in the Morning Post, under the signature of MARCUS. They were obviously written, if not

by a Minister, certainly by one high in the confidence of Administration. To these Letters, and to the detection of the unconstitutional doctrines which they contain, I applied particularly my observations. They met with no reply, nor with any denial, of which I am aware, that they were of the nature I supposed. I believe that when they were written, it was not expected that an adversary would have appeared on the field, in England. They gave me, however, an advantage of which I have been able to avail myself, in submitting to the consideration of the British public many political truths regarding Ireland. Will the friends of Ministers now venture to publish, in a pamphlet, the Letters of MARCUS? Will they now defend their proceedings, upon the grounds assumed in those Letters?

Your Lordship well knows how anxiously I have wished, in the part which I have so frequently taken in the discussion of the Catholic question, to observe myself, and to impress upon others, moderation; but especially to avoid the agitation of abstract points. Allow me again to quote my own Memoirs, in which the Author speaking of himself says, page 3:

“ He has never desired to see the Catholic question carried as a triumph or victory. In advocating the Catholic claims he never has sought to maintain their cause upon ideas introduced by modern revolutionary theories—by any novel doctrines of reform and innovation—by abstract metaphysical speculation—by arguments of pusillanimity or intimidation—or upon grounds of temporary expediency or of inevitable necessity. It has been his aim and his labour to establish them successfully upon the basis of that IMMUTABLE JUSTICE, applicable to all circumstances whether of national prosperity or adversity—and without reference to the NUMBERS or PAUCITY of the CLAIMANTS—upon the foundations of LAW, and the SOLID PRINCIPLES OF THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION. He has also thought with Mr.



Pitt, (looking at the measure not merely as it may regard the feelings or the interests of a particular portion of the community, but in its obvious tendency to improve and confirm the general system of establishments civil and religious, and to consolidate more effectually in one common cause of self-preservation, and by a sense of common interest, the strength and talents and resources of the Empire) that much of the expected benefit would be diminished, unless it were adopted without a serious conflict—and if not with unanimity, at least with the preponderance in its favour of PUBLIC OPINION. The writer of this Memoir has never been a partizan—he has always written according to his own impressions and the suggestions of an independent mind; and he has never allowed party or personal feelings to influence his sentiments or his conduct, with respect to the Catholic question.”

Such were, such continued, my sentiments; and such I had hoped would have been a result, to which even some of the present Ministers would have directed their exertions; but they have chosen hostility, and created a warfare, which it will not be easy to compose. Their conduct compels gentlemen, the most inclined to a course of moderation, to become the most vehement in opposition to the continuance of such Ministers in office; and of this I am persuaded, that it is only by the most pointed condemnation of such conduct in England the connection of the two countries can be saved \*.

\* Forbearance on the part of Catholics, indeed, has hitherto been considered, it seems, by Ministers, as pusillanimity; and because some of us the most interested in these claims, wished to conciliate—to repress the vehemence of those more ardent in the numbers of our persuasion—because we were solicitous to prevent the progress of the question to a serious crisis, Ministers have conceived that they were at liberty to proceed in a career of infatuation—to disgust the public mind of Ireland—to goad the Catholics to the last point of endurance; and that they were entitled to call upon us to vindicate measures, upon which we never were consulted, and which we could not approve—to expect of us to rescue them from the effects of their own folly—and then to insult us in a hire-

I shall ever hold the present Administration answerable for all the calamities, with which Ireland seems to be menaced. They have interrupted the fair constitutional proceedings, by which the Catholics sought to facilitate a settlement of the question; they have impeded all the good which might have resulted from those proceedings; and any mischief, which may occur, must be attributed solely to their own injudicious conduct.

What must be the feelings under which the members of the Committee will assemble? What would be those, under similar circumstances, of Englishmen? I am inclined to think that the English nation would never, under the same trials, exhibit the same patience, moderation, and forbearance, that have marked throughout the Irish Catholics; and of this I am persuaded, that no Minister would be allowed to adopt towards the people of England, or even venture to attempt, such a system, as that which has been pursued, under the auspices of the present Administration, towards their fellow-subjects in Ireland.

I advert particularly to the language of the Ministerial press. Is it possible to have read the newspapers in the

ling press, as persons timid, weak, and insincere. We are to be vilified, *in globo*, by the Treasury Prints—we are to be stigmatised throughout Europe, in a Proclamation—and the charge of disloyalty is to be commuted only for the inculpation of imbecility!

Can any one conceive the presumption (I will not use a stronger expression) of those, who professing themselves as they did during the last winter, ignorant of Mr. Hay's circular printed Letter, (*as notorious as an Irish newspaper*, and which the Earl of Doneghmore actually produced, I believe, in the House of Lords, as received by him in England long previously to the return of Mr. Pole to Ireland), announce to us that we are incapable of managing our own concerns—that we do not know our own people—and declare us to be led by persons, whose designs are unknown to the Catholic Body, but within the knowledge, forsooth, of gentlemen in the Castle of Dublin, most of them strangers to the country, and, according to their own declaration, so inattentive to what is passing in Ireland, as not to know the public proceedings of a public Committee.

pay, or under the influence, of Government during the last six months, and not to be impressed with disgust at their language respecting Ireland—with astonishment that any set of men, assuming the character of Statesmen, could allow such language, so derogatory to Government, so injurious even to themselves, to be daily continued, and even industriously circulated!

I speak not merely of abuse or low invective\*. But I wish to advert to a line of argument which the Treasury journals have adopted during the controversy, tending according to my own views of the subject, to the most dangerous consequences.

They have *insisted*, in the first place, upon arguing the claims of the Catholics as a matter *of right*. Allow me to trouble your Lordship on that point, with some observations.

The Catholics were not originally disposed to have rested their claims upon the foundation of abstract right. Mr. Fox in 1805 did not argue their case upon that ground. He was complimented on the occasion by Mr. Pitt; and if I may be allowed to speak of myself, throughout all my Tracts on the Catholic question, and especially on the present occasion in the Letters of Hiberno-Anglus, I have expressly, and repeatedly, deprecated such a discussion. Your Lordship will give me credit for the motive of this forbearance, which has proceeded from any thing but a sense of *weakness* in the Catholic cause,

\* One regrets to see such means employed on any occasion. They degrade the character—lessen the public estimation—and injure the true interests of newspapers. They will ultimately prove ruinous to newspapers themselves; and they defeat all the public good which, in my humble opinion, results from such publications. Whilst, however, such continues the usual style of these compilations, those who are aggrieved will generally be able, and also disposed to retaliate. I am the first however to acknowledge, that the Catholics or the people of Ireland, are not intitled to expect, that liberty of discussion should be only on their own side.

on that ground. I had avoided the discussion, because I felt the strength of the argument in my own favour, and on that account I dreaded its being brought into action. I always apprehended, however, that such would be the issue ultimately joined between the parties, from the course adopted by Administration; and my fears have been verified. Whilst declining the argument of abstract right, on my side, it was courted and provoked during the last autumn, on the part of Ministers and their advocates. They *would* have a proclamation—they *would* have a trial, they *would* argue the question as concerning right—and thus, in their wisdom, they have brought the matter to a point, in which they have nearly shaken the foundations of all law; and as if they sought to verify the former positions of their Attorney-General Mr. Saurin, in the Irish House of Commons, which brought upon that Gentleman, from Mr. Egan, the charge “*of unfurling the bloody flag of rebellion;*” they have raised a question tending even to dissolve the Union. Mr. Saurin declared in 1800, that the Union Act, if it passed, *would not be binding*; and Ministers have chosen to furnish, of their own accord, arguments in favour of that position. They insist upon raising a question of abstract right; but they have not chosen to remember that the Catholics, *i. e.* the people of Ireland, were excluded from Parliament only by an *English statute*\*; that England declared in 1783 that statute to be null and void, passed by an authority not binding upon Ireland, and therefore that the Catholics, until *that* period, were ILLEGALLY EXCLUDED. They thus invite the Catholics to ask what was the right of the Irish Parliament in 1783, to disfranchise the people of Ireland, more than that of the British Parliament to disfranchise the people of England? Mr. Pitt, from whom has arisen this distinction of right and expe-

\* 3 William and Mary, c. 2.

diency, had the weakness to ask in 1799, with a view to another argument, what was the right of the Irish Parliament to admit the Catholics to the elective franchise? The Catholics have profited by this hint. They will now ask, what was the right of the Irish Parliament at any time to *exclude* them; and they will also request to know of all the learned members in the University of Oxford, who voted against the election of Lord Grenville on account of his sentiments respecting Ireland, how *they* would be inclined to submit to an act of Parliament, or recognize the competency of such a statute, which should exclude, from sitting among the Lords and Commons of England, EVERY ENGLISH PROTESTANT!!!

One would have thought that the loss of America, principally attributable to the folly of considering not what it was proper to grant, but the grounds on which, what was admitted to be expedient, should be conceded, would have been a warning to the present Administration, and have induced them to deprecate a similar discussion with the people of Ireland. But by a fatality which has so long marked the proceedings of Great Britain towards her colonies and dependencies, as well as foreign powers, her Ministers first oppose every request, however reasonable—repudiate solicitation—promise after a time, and then retard performance—yield at length only to remonstrance—and defeat every advantage resulting from measures, which from the beginning may have been pronounced by men even of ordinary capacity to be of obvious policy. What has been the conduct of the present Administration, for instance, towards Malta\*?

\* In 1807 I had occasion to publish a Memoir upon the political state of Malta, in the hopes of pressing upon the attention of *Ministers* the necessity of an immediate settlement to that Island. I was never requested even to communicate the grounds on which I expressed the strong opinions manifested in that publication, still less any ideas that might have

Ministers have not been satisfied with driving the Catholics to the agitation of questions regarding abstract right. Their advocates have wished to excite in their minds ideas of a more *dangerous* tendency. They denominated in their journals the Catholic Committee, as the *Irish-petition-Parliament*, thereby suggesting to the people of Ireland, that the *petition-Parliament* would contain a representation in effect of the national will which could not be found in the Imperial Parliament. Can your Lordship, or any reasonable man conceive a course more injudicious; but what may we not conceive, from a party which proceeds upon no settled views, seeking to maintain itself in power only by epigrams or sarcasm, indifferent about futurity, and occupied solely with the success of some miserable and momentary subterfuge? The idea was not confined solely to the *newspapers* of Government. It seems to have been entertained by the first Law Officer of the Crown. What must have been the impression produced upon the people of Ireland when they heard the Attorney-General discanting during hours upon *treason, rebellion, faction, oratory, and sedition*, not it is *true* extending his accusation to every *individual* of the Catholic Body, but involving in it unequivocally every gentleman taking a lead in their political concerns, unable to produce a single witness in support of his operations—and afterwards, when confronted by a popular

occurred to me, after a very laborious attention to the subject, respecting the form of constitution or code of laws, suitable to the connection of that Island with the British Empire. I had personally, no pretensions to consideration; but the Maltese were entitled to claim the performance of good faith on the part of Britain. Nothing has been done—and it appears that the patience of the Maltese has become nearly exhausted. It is my intention to resume the consideration of the Maltese question. Malta has been sacrificed to the prejudices of Ministers regarding Ireland; and nothing has been done for Malta, because it would have afforded an argument for the settlement of Ireland!!!

and leading member of that body, denying the fact of having made imputations, which Mr. O'Connell stated he had distinctly marked down upon his brief—with the report of which all the newspapers had been filled—and on which the Ministerialists had feeced with delight, *rejoiced* at the idea, that such calamities might exist in Ireland, and be proved, in order to keep their friends in official situations! What would be said in England of an Attorney-General, who should open a prosecution in such inflammatory language, wholly destitute of evidence to support his invectives!

In doing me the honour to read these Letters, your Lordship, perhaps, will have the goodness to bear in mind, that they were excited by the immediate impression of the moment—that they refer to circumstances as they arose, and as they existed at the date of each Letter. It was not my intention originally to have declared from whom they proceeded. Having written, however, with great boldness and freedom, I have thought it incumbent on me to avow myself the Author.

There are occasions on which it is necessary to speak out—in which decided language is necessary—due to personal dignity—conducive to public advantage—and this appears to me to be one of those occasions. Sir John Moore in one of his memorable and prophetic dispatches from Spain observed, that it answered no good purpose to conceal the *true* state of affairs. We have gone on too long indeed, upon a general system both of public and personal delusion. To the cry of JACOBINISM has succeeded a cry of FACTION. The former ceased, only after it had made the *champion* of Jacobinism, a great and mighty sovereign. The latter, if not resisted by a firm spirit of opposition, will perhaps expire, only after it shall have dismembered, and destroyed the British Empire. We have now the mortification of beholding the

great and gigantic power, which we have constituted by a mistaken policy on the Continent; and if we persist in our present conduct, we shall speedily have to contemplate the ruin that will be accomplished at home, by continuing a system which banishes all sober reflection—shuns all careful investigation—disregards all serious monition—flattering first itself, and then the people, with a spirit of voluntary, but most dangerous, self-deception. It has been with the present Administration an invariable rule to adopt a conduct, calculated to irritate the temper of the Irish, and to represent any remonstrances made in or out of Parliament against a conduct so reprehensible, (in the view of preventing ulterior outrages against national feeling on the part of Ministers, or of promoting forbearance from violence on the part of the people of Ireland, by convincing them that the whole British nation do not approve, but that many respectable persons condemn, the conduct of Ministers) as an invitation to the Irish to adopt those proceedings, to which only the measures of Government must necessarily tend. Even *oratory* of late has become a crime. Of the latter, I apprehend, I stand no chance of being accused; and however disposed some may feel, I am well satisfied that persons *in authority* will hesitate, before they venture to prefer or countenance against *myself* the charge of faction. There exist circumstances, some of which are within the knowledge of your Lordship, that sufficiently preclude all probability of such an imputation, which if attempted, I should know how to retort, with more asperity than has been shown by HIBERN-ANGLUS, perhaps already, in many instances, but always against his natural inclination, and contrary to the general tenor of his political publications.

I have the honour to remain, &c.

JOHN JOSEPH DILLON.

22d December, 1811.



## CONVENTION ACT.

33 Geo. 3. c. 20.

AN Act to prevent the election or appointment of unlawful Assemblies, *under pretence* of preparing or presenting public Petitions or other Addresses to His Majesty or the Parliament.

“ WHEREAS, the election or appointment of assemblies, purporting to represent the people, or *any* description or number of the people of this realm, *under pretence* of preparing or presenting petitions, complaints, remonstrances, and declarations, and other addresses to the King, or to both or either Houses of Parliament, *for alteration of matters established by law*, or redress of alleged grievances in Church or State, may be made use of to serve the ends of factious and seditious persons, to the violation of the public peace, and the great and manifest encouragement of riot, tumult, and disorder—be it declared and enacted, by the King’s most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that all assemblies, committees, or other bodies of persons elected or in any other manner constituted or appointed to represent, or assuming or exercising a right or authority to represent, the people of this realm, or *any* number or description of the people of the same, or the people of any province, county, city, town, or other district within the same, *under pretence* of petitioning for, or in any other manner procuring an alteration of matters established by law in Church or State, save and except the knights, citizens, and burgesses elected to serve in the Parliament thereof; and save and except the Houses of Convocation duly summoned by the King’s writ, are unlawful assemblies; and it shall and may be lawful for any Mayor, Sheriff, Justice of the Peace, or any other Peace Officer, and they are hereby respectively authorized and required, within his and their respective jurisdictions, to disperse all such unlawful assemblies, and, if resisted, to enter the same, and to apprehend all persons offending in that behalf.

“ 2. And be it further enacted, That if any person shall give or publish, or cause or procure to be given or published, any written or other notice of election to be holden, or of any manner of appointment of any person or persons to be the Representative or Representatives, Delegate or Delegates, or to act by any other name or description whatever, as Representative or Representatives, Delegate or Delegates of the inhabitants, or of any description of the inhabitants of any province, county, city, town, or other district within this kingdom, at any such assembly; or if any person shall attend and vote at such election or appointment, or by any other means vote or act in the choice or appointment, of such Representatives or Delegates, or other persons to act as such, every person who shall be guilty of any of the said offences respectively, being thereof convicted by due course of law, shall be deemed guilty of a high misdemeanour.

“ 3. Provided always, That nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to affect elections to be made by Bodies Corporate, according to the charters and usage of such Bodies Corporate respectively.

“ 4. Provided also, That *nothing* herein contained shall be construed *in any manner* to prevent or *impede* the *undoubted right* of His Majesty's subjects of this realm *to petition* His Majesty, or both Houses, or either House of Parliament, for redress of *any* public or private grievance.”

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*By the Lord Lieutenant and Council of Ireland,*

#### A PROCLAMATION.

RICHMOND, &c.

Whereas, by an Act made in the Parliament of Ireland, in the 23d year of his present Majesty's Reign, entitled, “ An Act to prevent the election or appointment of *unlawful* assemblies, *under pretence* of preparing or presenting public Petitions or Addresses to his Majesty or the Parliament,” it is enacted, ‘ that all assemblies, committees, or other bodies of persons, elected, or in any other manner constituted or appointed to represent, or assuming or exercising a right or authority to represent, the people of this realm, or any number or description of people of the same, or the people of any

province, county, city, town, or other district within the same, *under pretence* of petitioning for, or in any other manner procuring an alteration of matters established by law, in Church or State, save and except the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, elected to serve in the Parliament thereof, and save and except the Houses of Convocation duly summoned by the King's writ, are unlawful assemblies; and it shall and may be lawful for any Mayor, Sheriff, Justice of the Peace, or other Peace Officer, and they are thereby respectively authorised and required, within his and their respective jurisdictions, to disperse all such unlawful assemblies; and if resisted, to enter into the same and to apprehend all persons offending in that behalf.' And it is further enacted, 'that if any person shall give or publish, or cause or procure to be given, or published, any written or other notice of election to be holden, or of any manner of appointment of any person or persons to be the representative, or representatives, delegate or delegates, or to act by any other name or description whatever as representative, or representatives, delegate, or delegates, of the inhabitants, or of any description of the inhabitants of any province, county, city, town, or other district within this kingdom, at any such assembly; or if any person, shall attend and vote at such election or appointment, or by any other means, vote or act in the choice or appointment of such representatives or delegates, or other persons to act as such, every person who shall be guilty of any of the said offences, respectively, being thereof convicted by due course of law, shall be deemed guilty of an high misdemeanour.'

And whereas, at a meeting or assembly of persons held in the city of Dublin, on the 9th of July inst. and styling themselves "A Meeting of the Catholics of Ireland," certain resolutions, amongst others, were entered into, and have since been published of the tenor following:

"Resolved, That a Committee of Catholics be therefore appointed, and requested to cause proper Petitions to be forthwith framed, for the Repeal of the Penal Laws, and to procure Signatures thereto, in all parts of Ireland, and to take measures for bringing such Petitions under the serious consideration of the Legislature, *within the first month* of the ensuing Sessions of Parliament;—

"Resolved, That the said Committee do consist of the Catholic Peers and their eldest Sons, the Catholic B aronets, the Prelates of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and also ten persons to be appointed by the Catholics in each county in Ireland, the survivors of the Delegates of 1793, to constitute an integral part of that number, and also of five persons to

be appointed by the Catholic inhabitants of each parish in Dublin.

“ Resolved, That the appointment of the said persons be made forthwith.

“ Resolved, That it be recommended to such Committee, to resort to all legal and constitutional means of maintaining a cordial communication of sentiment and co-operation of conduct, among the Catholics of Ireland, and generally of promoting the *favourable reception of their Petition*.

“ Resolved, That until the new Committee shall be appointed, the management of Catholic affairs shall be confided to the Catholic Peers, Baronets, and survivors of the Delegates of 1793.”

And whereas, there is reason to apprehend, that some of his Majesty's subjects may have already acted, and that others may be misled to act in furtherance of those resolutions, by taking a part in the election or appointment of delegates or representatives, for such proposed Assembly or Committee, and that the persons so elected or delegated; or to be so elected or delegated; may be disposed to meet and form such assembly or Committee as aforesaid:

And whereas, *such* an assembly as is by those resolutions proposed to be convened, is not only a *direct* violation of the provisions of the Statute aforesaid, and an unlawful assembly, but *tends directly to endanger* the peace and tranquillity of the State.

Now, we the Lord Lieutenant, by and with the advice of the Privy Council of Ireland, being determined, as far as in us lies, to enforce the due observance of the laws of this realm, and being anxious to prevent the mischiefs, which the violation of those Laws, and particularly of the Statute herein before mentioned, must occasion, do, by this our Proclamation, command all his Majesty's loving subjects of this part of the United Kingdom, that they do abstain from all acts and proceedings whatsoever, contrary to the provisions of the aforesaid Statute.

And we do further hereby call upon and require all Justices of the Peace, Mayors, Sheriffs, Bailiffs, and other Peace Officers, in this part of the United Kingdom, that they do proceed in due course of Law, to apprehend and hold to bail all persons against whom *information on oath* shall have been obtained of having given or published, or caused to be given or published, any written or other notice of elections to be holden, or of any manner of appointment of any representative or delegate for any such assembly, *as is herein before mentioned*, or of having voted, or in any manner acted, or who shall be found

actually voting, or in any other manner acting, in the election or appointment of such delegates or representatives, that the person or persons so offending, may be prosecuted according to Law; and in case an assembly of such delegates or representatives shall hereafter attempt to meet *in defiance of the law*, and *notwithstanding this our Proclamation*, that they shall proceed to disperse the same as an unlawful assembly, pursuant to the directions of the aforesaid Statute.

Given at the Council Chamber in Dublin, the 30th day of July, 1811.

Manners, C.

Westmeath.

Mayo.

Erne.

Charles Kildare.

Castle-Coote.

De Blaquiere.

Frankfort.

W. W. Pole.

D. L. Touche.

S. Hamilton.

Wm. Saurin.

Pat. Duigenan,

## CONTENTS.

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	Page.
<i>Preliminary Letter.</i> —On the Appointment and Responsibility of Ministers, .....	1
<i>Letter</i> I.—On the General Tendency and Irregularity, in point of Form, of the Proclamation, .....	9
<i>Letter</i> II.—On the Authority and Respect due to the Names signed at the foot of the Proclamation, and on the Accuracy of the Construction, which it gives to the Convention Act, .....	18
<i>Letter</i> III.—The same Subject continued, with a Digression concerning the Laws and Constitution of Scotland, .....	25
<i>Letter</i> IV.—On the Inexpediency of the Measures adopted by the Irish Government, .....	34
<i>Letter</i> V.—Review of the former Letters, and a Statement of the Principle on which the Question is to be considered, as between the Ministers and the Catholics, .....	49
<i>Letter</i> VI.—Opinions of the Author upon former Proceedings of the Catholics, .....	57
<i>Letter</i> VII.—On the Grounds of Defence on Behalf of Ministers, .....	65
<i>Letter</i> VIII.—The same Subject Continued, ...	74
<i>Letter</i> IX.—On the Argument of Ministers as advanced in the Letters of Marcus, ...	81
<i>Letter</i> X.—The Conduct of the Catholics Vindicated, .....	93
<i>Letter</i> XI.—Justification of their Conduct, .....	105
<i>Letter</i> XII.—On Mr. Pitt, .....	115
<i>Letter</i> XIII.—In Justification of the Catholics, and on the Motives by which Ministers have been Actuated, .....	121
<i>Letter</i> XIV.—A Justification of the Catholic Proceedings, as warranted by the Recommendation of their Parliamentary Friends, ...	141
<i>Letter</i> XV.—The Catholics Justified by the Requisitions of Ministers themselves, .....	149
<i>Concluding Letter</i> —Upon the Nature and Effects of the Legislative Union of Ireland with Great Britain, .....	155